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ABSTRACT

Communication Skills Through Authorship (CSTA) is an initial and early reading program designed to complement any basal reading plan and based on the premise that a child will learn best to read what is important to him personally. Begun in Idaho schools in 1969-70, the program encourages each student to tape record many impressions, stories, or experiences which he considers meaningful. Typed copies are returned to the child and become his personalized reader. He may choose to share his story with his teacher, his peers, or simply read it to himself. In 1971-72, district-wide implementation of the program began in grades one and two with a similar district serving as a control group. Experimental first graders significantly outscored the control students on the Stanford Achievement Test. No significant differences were found in achievement between second grade groups or in reading attitude and self-esteem for either group at both grade levels. Seventy-eight percent of the participating teachers expressed a strong desire to continue the program, and most indicated a decline in their preference for the basal approach and an increase in their preference for individualized and language experience approaches. A more complete program description and other findings are included in the document. (TO)

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CASSETTE TAPE RECORDING AS A PRIMARY METHOD IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY READING MATERIAL*

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Communication Skills Through Authorship (CSTA) is an initial and early reading program designed to complement any basal reading plan. Based on the premise that a child will best learn to read what is important to him personally, the program encourages each student in a classroom to tape record many impressions, stories, or experiences which he considers meaningful. Typed copies are returned to the child and put into his folder which then becomes his "personalized reader."

First and second grade students tape their stories in a colorful recording environment usually made from cardboard appliance boxes. When finished they form a small enclosure just right for one, made comfortable with rug or pillows, and ranging in style from rocket ships to Snoopy dog houses. In most classes children are allowed to record whenever they desire, other than during a teacher's specific lesson, thus preventing them from

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feeling constrained or hurried, and allowing greater creativity than when they orally dictate to a teacher or are required to print their own thoughts. When finished, the child "mails" his tape to a project typist who visits one or more times daily. She types his dictated narration using primer type and returns it with the tape, usually within one day.

When a child receives his typed story he may choose to share it with his teacher, his peers, or simply read it to himself. Early in the first grade the teacher or trained alternate such as an adult or intermediate grade pupil plays a prime reading role. There is a special intimacy in this sharing time. Reading original stories aloud to the author, and inviting him to read as his ability grows, has great meaning for children. They also enjoy hearing about each other's unique interests through teacher or peer sharing of compositions. Often the entire class may not only hear, but see a story as it is shown on the overhead projector while the child author reads it aloud.

All of the CSTA strategies, including key words, experience charts, pictured stories with captions, daily journals, taped dictations, and others are designed to lead the child from his own stories to the wide world of books. Second and third grade teachers have noticed that students with CSTA background have a higher interest in reading trade and library books and do more creative writing than students who have not had CSTA.

FINDINGS FROM THE INITIAL CSTA STUDIES

The first school year for cassette tape recording on a trial basis with two first grades and two second grades in Lewiston, Idaho was 1969-70. The initial studies were conducted at McSorley Elementary School with the encouragement, cooperation and active assistance of Mr. Roger Adams, principal. The trial was continued using the same four rooms in 1970-71. (Following the success and promise of the two trial years, a Title III, ESEA proposal was funded which permitted an invitational expansion of the approach to all first and second grade teachers from the district). The tables and discussion in this section portray findings based upon a comparison of children who experienced cassette recording during the trial years with those who did not. Cassette recording was experienced in the second grade only, or, in both the first and second grade years. Both the control and experimental groups continued to use the basal series during the trial years (Harris et.al., 1967). Children who used cassette recorders are referred to as the experimental group (E). Children randomly chosen from the other seven elementary schools in the district who did not experience the use of cassette recorders are referred to as the control group (C).

A second grader in the 1969-70 school year started school as a first grader in 1968. These children are referred to as the S'68 set, those starting first grade in 1969 are labelled the S'69 set. Children starting school in 1970 are labelled the

S'70, etc.

All readiness tests given in early first grade are Metropolitan Readiness Tests (MRT). All achievement tests are one of three forms of the Standford Achievement Tests (SAT) reading portions only, and were given at the close of first grade, at the beginning and close of second grade, and at the beginning and close of third grade.

Readiness test scores and achievement test scores were gathered over a three year period. Upon entering third grade all students in the district are given the Otis-Lennon I.Q. test as a part of the regular district testing program, and that data was also helpful in assessing the findings from the initial studies.

The findings of the initial studies are conveyed in four doctoral theses. Excerpts from three of these theses are reported here. Schomer studied S'68 and S'69 children who were in first and second grades during the 1969-70 school yea (Schomer, 1972). Harris studied S'68, S'69 and S'70 children who were in first, second and third grades during the 1970-71 school year (Harris, 1972). Owens studied S'69 children when they were in third grade, during the 1971-72 school year (Owens, 1971). Table 1 provides an overview of this information. The fourth theses was not concerned with data relevant to the present description (Willardson, 1971).

[Table 1 should appear here]

Initial CSTA Findings

Researcher	Year of Study	Students Studied with Their Grade Level in Parentheses
Schomer	1969-70	S'68(second) S'69(first)
Harris	1970-71	S'68(third) S'69(second) S'70(first)
Owens	1971-72	S'69(third)

Table 1

S'68 children experienced no cassette recording in first grade, but did use cassette recorders in their second grade year. S'68 were studied by Schomer when they were in Grade Two and by Harris when they were in Grade Three. Schomer, Harris and Owens all studied S'69 children who experienced taping in Grades One and Two. When Owens studied S'69 children they were in Grade Three and were no longer taping. Harris also studied S'70 children who used cassette tape recorders when they were in Grade One. (S'70 children were in the experimental group in Grade One, but in Grade Two become part of the District wide Implementation Group discussed under the second major heading.) Owens, whose study was most recent, did not study S'68 nor S' 70 children because the main purpose of his study related to creativity. The reason part of Owens' findings are included here is because they provide additional evidence about reading achievement and establish that E children had no advantage in intelligence over C children when they were tested in Grade Three.

Schomer's Findings

During the 1969-70 school year Schomer studied S'68 and S'69 children. He compared MRT scores of entering first graders from the experimental school with scores of randomly chosen first graders from three other elementary schools in the district. At the end of the school year he compared SAT scores of both groups. After adjusting for pre-test differences, he found that the first graders who had cassette recorded and read their

own compositions, in addition to studying the basal series, had highly significantly superior scores on the SAT in all three achievement sub-tests (.01 level) over the control group using basals alone. The sub-tests included Word Reading (WR), Paragraph Meaning (PM), and Vocabulary (V).

Schomer also compared SAT scores obtained at the beginning of second grade with SAT scores obtained at the close of second grade. Achievement scores from E, which used cassette recorders and read their own compositions, were compared with randomly chosen students' achievement scores from C, drawn from four other elementary schools in the district who did not use the cassette recorders. Both groups received instruction from basals. Second grade E students made essentially equal growth on the Word Meaning (WM) sub-test when compared with the C students. However, in PM the E students achieved significantly superior scores when compared with the C students (.05 level). The total amount of time devoted to reading instruction was held constant for E and C groups at both grade levels.

Harris' Findings

During the 1970-71 school year Harris studied S'68, S'69 and S'70 children. First graders in E made significantly higher SAT scores over those in C (.05 level). This was true for all three areas of achievement - V, PM and WR. For second grade Harris found that the E's SAT scores were significantly

greater in WM (.05 level) and highly significantly greater in PM (.01 level). At third grade Harris found that E started at a significantly higher achievement (.05 level) and concluded with significantly higher achievement (.05 level) in both WM and PM.

Owens' Findings

Owens, in his study on third graders done 1971-72, found E achieved significantly higher PM and Word Study (WS) scores (.05 level) compared to a C composed of randomly chosen students from two district elementary schools. He also found that the E students' intelligence as measured by the Otis-Lennon Intelligence Test was not significantly superior to the C groups'. It was reassuring to learn that E children excelled in reading apparently because of the CSTA tape dictation opportunity and not because they were inherently more intelligent.

Thus, three studies in Lewiston, Idaho confirmed the contribution of CSTA to the enhanced reading performance of primary grade students. These studies possess a limited longitudinal quality also. Both Harris' and Owens' studies confirmed the lasting effects into late third grade of a program employed in Grades One and Two. Table 2 presents an overview of the findings of the Schomer, Harris and Owens studies.

[Table 2 should appear here]

Initial CSTA Study Findings

Researcher	Grade One	Grade Two	Grade Three
Schomer 1969-70	E group (N=51) exceeded C group (N=54) on SAT[1] in WR[2], PM[3] and V[4] (at .01 level)	E group (N=43) exceeded C group (N=57 in SAT on PM (at .05 level)	Not studied
Harris 1970-71	E group (N=39) exceeded C group (N=48) on SAT in WR, PM and V (at the .05 level)	E group (N=53) exceeded C group (N=35)[5] on SAT in WM and PM (at the .01 level)	E group (N=36) exceeded C group (N=40) on SAT in WM and PM (at the .05 level)
Owens 1971-72	Not studied	Not studied	E group (N=32)[7] did not exceed C group (N=45)[8] on I.Q. test; E group did exceed C group on SAT in WS[6] and PM (at .05 level)

Table 2

[1]Stanford Achievement Test

[2]Word Reading

[3]Paragraph Meaning

[4]Vocabulary

[5]Word Meaning

[6]Word Study

[7]Randomly chosen from 45

[8]Randomly chosen from 102

Subjective Findings

As important as were the statistical findings during the initial studies, the subjective finding that 95% of all second graders could read everything they had dictated was even more impressive. Using their normal, wide ranging speaking vocabulary and their own syntax, children needed no coaxing to read if a listener could be found. Interest in reading their own stories rapidly gave way to devouring library and trade books. We seemed to have produced children who wanted to read.

DISTRICT WIDE IMPLEMENTATION OF CSTA

On the basis of the initial studies, Lewiston was chosen for Title III, ESEA project to enlarge the trial of CSTA to other schools. First and second grade teachers in the district were shown slides and heard reports about the program. First through third grade teachers from the neighboring community of Lapwai (with 40% Nez Perce Indian children) and Saint Stanislaus parochial school in Lewiston were also introduced to the program. Teachers were then invited to volunteer to utilize tape recorded dictations as a complement to their basal program. (The term, "complement," was suggested by one of the participating principals to denote that the volunteer would faithfully implement CSTA along with the basal program.) Consultants and local trainers conducted an eight day pre-school in-service workshop to pre-

pare teachers and principals to implement CSTA strategies.

It was at this time that the CSTA complement grew to embrace more than tape recorded dictation and the basal program. New elements included were experience charts, key vocabulary, daily journals with interim phonetic spelling, increased use of the best read-aloud literature, phonetic analysis strategies from the basal program applied to orally dictated-typed stories, sustained silent reading, and, as children became ready, individual conferences on books read.

All but three first and all second grade teachers volunteered to participate in the Lewiston district-wide implementation yielding a sub-total of thirty-four. Because of this response, an experimental-control design within the district was not possible. All teachers from Lapwai and St. Stanislaus parochial school volunteered along with some district special education and remedial reading teachers which increased the grand total of teacher participants to forty-five.

Student Findings

A control group was selected in another school district with children whose parents had essentially similar socio-economic backgrounds.

Students in Grade One of C had a mean score significantly greater at the beginning of the year on the MRT. However, CSTA

students significantly out-performed non-CSTA students as measured by the SAT.

At second grade, students in E made significantly higher pre-test scores, but C students made significantly higher gains and finished very close to the scores of the CSTA group at the end of the year. No significant differences were found on post-tests.

Students in both the E and C groups were given the San Diego County Inventory of Reading Attitude (SDCIRA) as pre- and post-tests. There were no significant differences in pre-tests, post-tests nor in gain scores between the two groups.

A modified Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory and the IOX Self Appraisal Inventory were given in October and May with no significant differences between E and C groups in pre-tests, post-tests, nor in gain scores.

The following findings are reported for only the Lewiston district schools, since project goals predicted certain changes within the district. These are excerpts only, as the complete report would exceed space limitations.

Teacher Findings

When presented with an opportunity to express on a single dimension scale their degree of preference for continuing the CSTA complement, 78% of the teachers checked the two most affirmative categories of the five choices. They expressed a

"strong" or "very strong" desire to continue CSTA in the second year. Nine teachers expressed a "moderate" desire and no teacher checked the "weak" or "very weak" level of desire to continue.

Twenty-nine teachers within the Lewiston District who returned questionnaires felt that, on the average, they knew 57% of their students better as a result of participating in CSTA.

The SDCIRA for adults was used to detect any changes in attitude toward the teaching of reading. The 15 teachers at Grade One declined in their preference for Basic at close to the 5% level of significance. Preference for Individualized was strengthened at the 1% level of significance and preference for Language Experience was strengthened at the 5% level of significance.

The 19 second grade teachers indicated on SDCIRA a decline in their preference for Basic at the 1% level of significance, strengthened their preference for Individualized at the 1% level of significance, and strengthened their preference for Language Experience at the 5% level of significance.

Principal Findings

All seven principals utilizing CSTA expressed a "very strong" preference for continuing CSTA in its second year, none choosing a desire level of "strong" or below on a Likert scale.

All principals utilizing CSTA encouraged the use of fifth or sixth grade students as readers of, or listeners to, first or second grade compositions. Five out of seven provided the assistance on a once-a-week (or more often) basis.

On the SDCIRA for adults, principals registered no significant change towards Basic, a highly significant increased preference for Individualized (1% level) and a highly significant increased preference for Language Experience (1% level).

Parent Findings

On the basis of 758 parental replies to seven specific questions on a questionnaire and the analysis of these responses, two selected findings are reported:

a. We are 95% confident that between 81% to 87% of the students will discuss their tapes with their parents.

b. We are 95% confident that between 95% to 96% of the parents feel CSTA to be a worthwhile complement to the basal reading series.

In addition to the specific questions, written comments were invited on the questionnaire. Comments made by 393 parents showed that 96% were either positive or highly positive.

A LOOK AHEAD

At the time of this writing, Lewiston is in its second year of district-wide implementation of CSTA. Because of the quality

of its ESEA Title III supported efforts, the Idaho State Department of Education nominated and the Right to Read Office chose Lewiston as a school-based expansion site. The natural outgrowth of the program in Grades One and Two is individualized reading in grades three through junior high and, if possible, into high school. Right to Read funds are being directed toward staff training and the provision of a great variety and number of selected paperback books.

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